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JUNE 7, 2005

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Connecticut Convention Center Opens For Business Nearly 20,000 Visit New Center in First Week

(Hartford, CT, June 2005) _ Nearly 20,000 people visited the new Connecticut Convention Center during its opening week, including an estimated 10,000 people who attended the center's opening day events.

"On our very first day of business, we served more than 2,000 meals, hosted 550 exhibitor booths, welcomed more than 10,000 visitors and enjoyed a performance by a national recording artist," said Jeanne O'Grady, the center's director of sales and marketing. "We believe our opening day represents the largest business to business gathering of its kind in the state's history. We're very pleased."

More than 1,000 people attended a worker appreciation event on May 31 in the center's 40,000-square-foot ballroom. On Thursday, June 2, Governor M. Jodi Rell and a host of dignitaries cut the ceremonial ribbon to officially open the new center for business.

The center's opening event, the Connecticut Xpo for Business 2005, included 550 exhibitor booths representing companies from around the state and the New England region. The building opened at 7 a.m. with a breakfast event for 1,200 people. At noon, the center served lunch for 1,000. Every meeting room in the building was used for educational tracts and hospitality suites throughout the day. The day ended at 7 p.m., following a concert by Chuck Negron's Three Dog Night.

On June 3, 1,500 attended a graduation ceremony for Capital Community College; on June 4, 2,000 scrapbookers attended a Creative Memories convention; and on Sunday, June 5, an estimated 6,000 residents and stakeholders attended a community Open House from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"For a building this size, with a staff this new, the opening went very, very well," said Ben Seidel, the center's executive director. "We showcased a high level of expertise in a brand new building. I believe this is the strongest opening team I've ever had the pleasure to work with."

The 540,000-square-foot Connecticut Convention Center is the largest convention facility between New York and Boston, with 140,000 square feet of exhibition space, 25,000 square feet of meeting space and a 40,000 square foot ballroom. Its opening came four

years and two days after ground was broken. An estimated 35,000 visitors are expected for various events scheduled during the first 30 days of operation.

"This is a top notch facility that benefits the entire state," Governor Rell said. "It is my hope that Connecticut residents and businesses will make full use of this convention center as a magnet for new business and commerce. The Connecticut Convention Center gives us a new tool in the effort to create jobs and improve our economy by attracting business from outside our state."

Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez praised the efforts behind bringing a convention center to the state's capital city. "In the coming years, hundreds of thousands of people are going to use this building for meetings and conventions. They will also get a chance to experience one of our country's original cities --- everything from our history, culture and architecture to the diversity of our people, which is reflected in our shops, restaurants, and entertainment. Hartford will roll out the welcome mat to make everyone feel at home."

The \$271 million Connecticut Convention Center is the largest component of the 30 acre Adriaen's Landing project in downtown Hartford. Is one part of a citywide effort by the state and the city of Hartford to revitalize Hartford's downtown business district.

Since 1999, state government has invested nearly \$1 billion in Hartford's renaissance. This large public investment has been matched by heavy private sector investment in downtown Hartford. Conservative estimates put the level of private sector investment, over the last five years, in excess of \$1 billion. Private investment has led to new hotel and market rate housing projects and historic renovations.

Over the next two to three years construction will continue adjacent to the new convention center. Construction is planned starting later this year on the landmark Connecticut Center for Science and Exploration. The Center is a \$150 million project scheduled for completion in early 2008. The science center will be a major destination for visitors to the region, but it will also play a key role in educating Connecticut students about the world of science.

In August, the 409-room Marriott Hartford Downtown is scheduled to open adjacent to the convention center. Both the convention center and the Marriott Hotel are designed for future expansion. The convention center design allows for an 80,000 square foot expansion and the hotel design allows for the future addition of more than 300 rooms.

The grand opening of the convention center is a major milestone in Hartford's renaissance, but it is just one part of the overall picture. The state and the city continue to work with private sector partners to improve the vitality of Connecticut's capital city.

The Connecticut Convention Center is managed for the state by Waterford Management.

For more information about the center or state investments in Hartford's revitalization we encourage you to visit these websites: <http://www.enjoyhartford.com>, www.ctconventions.com, www.waterfordgroup.net or www.cceda.state.ct.us

The Greater Hartford Convention & Visitors Bureau (GHCVB) enhances the economic fabric and quality of life of Hartford by working in partnership with Hartford's businesses, institutions, nonprofits and surrounding communities to market the city as a premier destination for national, regional and statewide conventions.

The GHCVB, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2004, created and promotes the Bring it Home campaign, which encourages the region's leaders to attract associations, organizations and corporations from across the country into Hartford for their events.

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